

# Historical Heroes: Jesse Owens



**Directions:** Read the passage below, then answer the questions that follow.

James Cleveland Owens was born in Oakville, Alabama, in 1913. He was nine years old when his family moved to Cleveland, Ohio. That is where he got the nickname Jesse. His new teacher asked his name. He shared that his name was "J.C." He had a Southern accent, and the teacher did not hear him correctly. She heard him say "Jesse." The nickname stuck.

As a boy, Owens was on the track and field team. He also took what odd jobs he could find. He had an after-school job. Owens's coach let him practice before school. That way, he could keep his job at a shoe repair shop.

After high school, he went to Ohio State University. He was on the track team, where he set three world records and tied a fourth. Even though he was a star on the track team, he still faced racism that was everywhere. He was forced to live off campus with other African American athletes. When the team traveled, he was made to stay in hotels designated as "black only."

Despite those circumstances, he focused on his training and competition. He went on to win four gold medals in the 1936 Olympic Games in Germany.

## Questions

1. Jesse Owens was on the \_\_\_\_\_ team in school.

2. Why did Jesse Owens practice track and field before school?

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3. What college did Jesse Owens attend?

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4. How many records did Jesse Owens set when he was in college?

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5. How did Jesse Owens show that he was a hard worker?

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